

## SHIRE OF WEST ARTHUR



Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting of the Shire of West Arthur held on Thursday 24 March 2022 at the Hawthorne Room, West Arthur CRC, Burrowes Street, Darkan.

In accordance with the *Local Government 1995 Act 5.27 (3)* and Regulation 15 of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* the matters to be discussed at a general electors' meeting are, firstly, the contents of the annual report for the previous financial year and then any other general business

### **1000 ATTENDANCE**

#### **COUNCILLORS**

Cr Neil Morrell	Shire President
Cr Graeme Peirce	Deputy Shire President
Cr Duncan South	

#### **STAFF**

Vin Fordham Lamont	Chief Executive Officer
Jamie Muir	Manager Works and Services
Melinda King	Manager – Financial Reporting

#### **ELECTORS**

Ian Woodruff, Ray Harrington, Beryl Harrington, Phil Harrington, Anne Doudle, Kerryn Chia, Marie Lloyd, Greg Lloyd, Pam Stockley, Jacquie Bunce, Trevor Bunce, Kylie Whitaker, Rebecca South.

#### **VISITORS**

Tracy Zemunik (until 6.20pm)  
Bryan Zemunik (until 6.20pm)

#### **APOLOGIES**

Cr Robyn Lubcke  
Cr Karen Harrington  
Cr Neil Manuel  
Darren Friend (Acting Manager Corporate Services)

#### **ABSENT**

Cr Adam Squires

### **2000 PRESENTATIONS**

2100 Presentation by the Executive Officer of Blackwood Biosecurity Group, Tracy Zemunik.

Presentation attached.

## Meeting of Electors – Shire of West Arthur

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at approximately 6pm.

My name is Tracy Zemunik and I am the Executive Officer of Blackwood Biosecurity (or BBI as we refer to it). I am pleased to be here today to provide some information to the Electors of the Shire of West Arthur on what we can do to assist the landowners in this area in the management of widespread and established declared pests. That includes both vertebrate pests as well as declared weeds.

However please note that I am not here today to present to you today anything regarding the model of the Declared Pest Rate (or DPR). This is a government charge, that is raised by RevenueWA. These funds once collected, are matched by the State Government and paid into Declared Pest Account which is administered by DPIRD. To be clear the Declared Pest Rate is not a shire levy, and it is not a BBI levy.

BBI is an independent community-led not for profit association, who receives - on certain conditions being met – the funds out of the Declared Pest Account. The funds are provided to BBI to assist, support and compliment the landowners with fulfilling the management of declared pest on their land.

The catchment area of BBI operates across the Shires of West Arthur, Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes and the Southern part of Donnybrook-Balingup – which as you can appreciate is a diverse and expansive catchment area.

As a consequence of BBI operating in this area the state government currently match dollar for dollar the amount of rates levied. So for every dollar that the landowners pay the government contributes a dollar. If no Registered Biosecurity Group operates in the area – no matched funding is forwarded and if ultimately rates are unpaid the government also withdraws that matched funding.

Land owned by the crown or government agencies – be they local, state or federal government – is not subject to the rate and the owners of those properties are still responsible for the management and maintenance of that land. Therefore BBI represents private landowners only. Every dollar paid by landowners in the BBI catchment area goes back to the private landowners plus \$1 from the state government under the matching arrangement.

So BBI represents a tremendous opportunity to the landowners in the area to get support and assistance in the management of Declared Pests on their own properties compared to others who don't have an organisation like BBI representing them do not.

For the 2022 financial year, and based on the operational plan, we had estimated that West Arthur ratepayers contribute to BBI around \$25k per annum. In addition, because of the model of dollar for dollar matching the state government also contributes approx. \$25k per annum for the benefit of West Arthur landowners.

Some of the support we offer with these funds include:

- We have all manner of equipment which can be hired, from boom sprayers to pig traps, tree poppers to fox traps - wildlife cameras and other equipment. These are available to hire at no cost to all ratepayers to aid them in their pest management – and all are available immediately.
- We aim to continue to invest in new or additional equipment which will provide ongoing assistance – and to provide access to innovations in the management of the declared pests.
- To that end we have recently completed the order to purchase a number of the Hoggone Bait boxes plus the live bait and placebo baits for farmers to trial on their properties. This is understood to be target specific and a cost effective method of controlling feral pigs. We expect delivery of these within the next 2 weeks and they will be available for the ratepayers in West Arthur to be a part of the trial from the date they are delivered at no cost to the trial participants. All we ask is the partnership of the landowners on with the feedback on the degree of success and any lessons learnt for the benefit of and information for your community.
- We also currently have 50 available application slots of the Restricted Chemical 1080 Permits, where BBI will not only assist you with the preparation and submission of

the application (subject to the normal permit requirements) but the tab for the \$83 odd dollar fee per permit is picked up by BBI through arrangements we have in place with DPIRD. In order to make the most of these permit applications these must be submitted by BBI but area available to landowners at no additional cost right now.

- In addition, we recently completed the RHDV1-K5 Calicivirus release for the control of rabbit populations – our calculated cost per feed site spread across the entire catchment area ( and this includes vials of the live virus, delivery costs into WA, mixing into oats for the release, travel to site where mixing is performed as well as travel to central collection points and labour costs of staff to coordinate, mix and deliver the program) is estimated at \$17 per feeding site. The participants from West Arthur shire in the program we just completed rolling out was for an average of 6 feeding sites per participant. We have had an excellent take up of the program across the whole catchment area and would like to encourage more participants from West Arthur shire in future rolls outs – the more participants we have the greater the impact to the rabbit population, but also the cost of the program reduces as we spread the travel etc over a greater number of participants.
- We have plans to provide support in the management of cape tulip in late august as well as ongoing support with

bridal creeper and cotton bush, and will work with local contractors in providing this support.

- Our plan is to co-ordinate and deliver education workshops to new land owners and provide information where innovation may prove to be more effective than tried and true methods to established landowners.
- One of our most important goals however for areas such as West Arthur is to advocate on behalf of landowners. That is where we feel we can truly add value for the ratepayers here by communicating, co-ordinating and following up with various government agencies or absentee landlords where many problems stem from. Let us have the conversations for you – your time is better spent on managing your properties.

Ultimately, we have prepared a program of support based on what we understand to best suit the needs of the area. We develop these priorities through face to face events such as at the Darkan Sheepfest and through responses to surveys or social media, but without input and feedback from rate payers – we can only assume that we are delivering what is needed.

I appreciate that I have focussed often today on the financial implications of the programs we have, and I have done this intentionally as much of the feedback I hear is regarding what landowners get for their levy. I am happy to provide ratepayers with this information in an open and transparent way, but I seek the input from the ratepayers here in West

Arthur and across all of our catchment is what is valuable to them.

Therefore, we ask for your input and feedback, we ask for your involvement in the organisation.

Given the restrictions COVID has placed over many events in recent times, we are increasing our local presence by hiring space at the CRC here one day each month to enable us to connect more with the community here in West Arthur. This monthly attendance commences on Tuesday and will be attended by our Biosecurity Officer. You are welcome to talk to us about your needs.

We also currently have vacancies on the Management Committee, which is the volunteer board of management. I would love to discuss with all interested parties how they may be able to become part of the Management Committee to ensure that the interest of your area is truly represented.

I thank everyone for their time today and I am happy to answer any questions I can regarding the support the BBI can offer.

### **3000 CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

3100 Annual Electors Meeting Minutes 9 February 2021

**Recommendation:**

**That the Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held in the Darkan Town Hall on 9 February 2021 be confirmed as true and correct.**

**Amendment to Recommendation:**

**That the Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held in the Darkan Town Hall on 9 February 2021 be amended to include the following comments made at that meeting by Kevin King that “the Shire has been involved in corruption over the last ten years, we have paperwork to prove it and there is more to come”.**

Moved: Ian Woodruff

Seconded: Ray Harrington

**CARRIED**

**Substantive Motion:**

**That the Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held in the Darkan Town Hall on 9 February 2021 as amended be confirmed as true and correct.**

Moved: Ian Woodruff

Seconded: Ray Harrington

**CARRIED**

### **4000 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2021**

4100 Receival of Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2021

**Recommendation:**

**That the Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2021 as presented, be received.**

Moved: Cr Graeme Peirce

Seconded: Cr Duncan South

**CARRIED**

### **5000 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS ELECTORS MEETING**

5100 Corruption Allegation Against the Shire

Ray Harrington: At the previous annual electors meeting, the Shire (which includes the CEO, Works Manager and staff) was accused of corruption. Ray said that he has given 60 years of service to the community and believes that his reputation has been tarnished. He requested an audience with the Shire to go through the paperwork to prove any corruption.

Cr Neil Morrell: There is no paperwork that indicates any corruption within the organisation. That was only words spoken by the previous president, for which he later apologised. The Shire hasn't accused Ray of corruption, he was simply the Shire President at the time. Council will be happy to meet with Ray to discuss this matter.

Phil Harrington: Kevin King was found guilty of a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* by the standards panel. The breach was in relation to Regulation 20 of the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021. No sanction was issued

to Kevin as he had already apologized for his comments. Phil requested this outcome be noted.

Ray Harrington: Ray said he was happy that it's in the minutes now, irrespective of what happens down the track.

## **6000 GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **6100 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE**

- Caretaker Period for Councils

Phil Harrington asked why councils do not operate under a caretaker period leading up to a local government election. Commonwealth and State governments do so to ensure that major decisions are not made by outgoing councils who may not have a mandate by the electors after the election.

The CEO responded that this is one of the reforms that the Minister for Local Government is currently examining. The CEO also said that it is possible for Council to adopt its own policy on this matter and provided a sample WALGA template.

Phil Harrington noted that other Councils do have a caretaker period. He thanked the CEO Vin for providing a quick response to the questions. He also noted that we could be waiting years for the changes to be made by the minister.

Ray Harrington commented about LG reform. The reality is that the Shire President is ensconced for two years. The Shire President elected by Council should be able to be removed by Council. Confidence was lost in the previous President and he couldn't be removed by Council; only the Minister currently has that power. A Premier or Prime Minister, however, can be sacked. Council should request the Minister to introduce this power.

The CEO stated that the LG Reform submission period has closed for comment and input. Individuals, WALGA, LG Professionals, and Councils were all invited to have input.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the CEO was advised by the Deputy President that Council did, in fact, include this matter in its submission to the reform process. The CEO then emailed relevant details to Ray Harrington.

#### **Motion:**

**That Council consider adopting a caretaker period policy similar to the template provided by WALGA.**

Moved: Phil Harrington

Seconded: Ray Harrington

**CARRIED**

- Pam Stockley asked how the Shire was going with demolishing derelict buildings in town.

The CEO responded that it is currently processing an application for Demolition of the old butcher shop. Other buildings, particularly towards the eastern end of Burrowes St, will be investigated over time.

#### 6200 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

- Pam Stockley on behalf of Mary Dew asked how many dogs a person can have and can we up the ante with ranger services.

The CEO said that one wandering dog was impounded this week. The Shire understands the issues such as the risk of a traffic accident, risk to children and other vulnerable people, and defecation on private and community property. If anyone sees wandering dogs, please take a photo showing the location so the ranger can follow up. Fines may assist with deterring re-offending owners.

Anne Doudle raised complaints of dogs chasing sheep at their property neighbouring town and other landowners neighbouring town have the same issue. By the time anyone can attend it is too late.

The CEO said that if the Shire was to increase ranger services in the future, it would need to be consider in annual budgets.

Pam Stockley asked if dogs can be taken away if unregistered.

The CEO said all dogs must be registered and that they are not released from the pound unless they are registered and microchipped.

- Greg Lloyd asked a question about caretaker Councils. Who would make up the caretaker council?

The President replied that the Council goes into recess – and doesn't make major decisions until after the election.

Ray Harrington: "Like appointing CEO nine hours before term finishes."

- Anne Doudle asked for an update on Storm Damage to roads from last year.

The Manager Works and Services responded that the damage estimate was sent to DFES in December.

The CEO added that Staff changes at DFES resulted in our application not being approved yet but that this should happen by the end of March.

The Manager Works and services said that an external contractor will be used. The tender process to appoint the contractor takes three weeks. Could get a start however possibly not have works finished before winter.

The Manager Works and Services is looking at a semi-permanent fix to Shields Road. Repairs could be \$50,000 to \$60,000 and if works are done prior to approval, they might not be funded. Capital program was delayed this year due to wet weather, but we could start storm damage works next week or the following week. Shields Road has been inaccessible for six months. Temporary solution would involve removing existing steel pipe, fill with gravel and seal. Two

culverts would remain in place. Next summer, the Shire will look at replacing the two culverts.

- In relation to local traffic only on roads, Ray Harrington said that during harvest time road trains are using “local traffic only” roads. He would like to see signage on these roads, so limits are obvious. Some roads affected are Hughes Mill Road and Cordering North Road.

The Manager Works and services replied that quite a few roads are local traffic only and this would require a lot of signs. There are problems with some condition and safety assessments regarding heavy vehicle hierarchy (e.g. RAV4) as Main Roads WA is unable to provide current data. Wouldn't be able to assess for six months.

The Deputy Shire President said that Main Roads WA should resource these activities, not the Shire.

- Anne Doudle referred to the incident on Coalfields Road causing diversion onto roads that heavy traffic should not use including Bunce King bridge. Bridges should have a load limit sign.

The Manager Works and Services replied that the Shire doesn't have control over traffic management if an accident occurs on a Main Roads road.

Anne Doudle said that on the previous occasion, Main Roads told her to contact the Shire.

The Manager Works and Services said that if we are requested to do traffic management then we may control diversion. He has contacted Main Roads to request load limits for bridges and has been given a figure of 60/70 tonne as a guide for bridges. Main Roads has regulatory limits and the Shire can put load limits on bridges however would require a structural assessment done by a consultant as Main Roads are unable to provide reports. Consultant costs would need to be considered in the budget.

Ray Harrington said that the alternative route to avoid Bunce King Bridge only adds approximately 1.5km to the route.

The Manager Works and Services said that the Shire has just spent \$24,000 on bridge maintenance on Bunce King Bridge.

Anne Doudle noted that there is still have more to do as one support is not completed.

- Phil Harrington said that he had heard Shire staff are under the pump due to lack of staff. Is anything being done to address it?

The CEO queried whether this question was based on a lack of licensing staff as staff have not been available for licensing recently due to a staff member on long service leave, one on annual leave and another on maternity leave. One member of staff has also been in Covid isolation. The Shire has a lot of part time staff and he is currently reviewing the organisational structure which will be reflected in the budget. The staff we do have are very good and proactive and we are working on retaining those staff.

Phil Harrington said that he understands that jobs are sometimes shared with staff which he doesn't necessarily think works well. He also said that it is lucky that staff have been able to work together well.

## **7000 CLOSURE**

The President declared the meeting closed at 7.03pm.